



## The Home File

One very important thing a parent can do to help school meetings run smoothly is to keep a Home File containing their student's special education information. This file will be rich with information and can help a parent significantly in preparing for the meeting. It can also provide the basis of "evidence" that can help bolster a parent's "case" if they feel their student may need more or a different type of service or is not making adequate progress. The Home File will augment the school's official educational records (a copy of which may be requested by the parent) by including some more specific items as well as documentation of home/school communication.

Parents sometimes report feeling that the school isn't following their child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), but do not have a copy of the IEP. Parents may feel their child is not making adequate progress. But, how does a parent know? Report cards, scores on standardized tests such as ISTEP and homework all provide evidence of success, failure or need for improvement. Parents can take these documents to the case conference and use them to support their request for more or different services, or different goals, in a way that just a "feeling" cannot. Feelings are not objective. Written documentation is evidence! To effectively advocate, parents must be prepared. Create your Home File as soon as your student is referred for their first special education evaluation. Don't wait until a problem arises.

The home file should contain:

- IEP or Section 504 Plan or Service plan (non-public schools)
- Report Cards, samples of graded homework, and any documentation of progress towards IEP goals
- Statewide Assessment Data (such as ISTEP)
- School evaluations and other outside evaluations
- All written communication with outside professionals including reports/evaluations/letters/recommendations from student's doctor/psychologist/psychiatrist/therapist regarding student's disability
- All written communication to and from school including hand written notes, comments on homework, email, notice of conferences
- Dated notes regarding important phone conversations between parent and school
- Parent's home observations on academic tasks or tasks that are relevant to school issues

If Applicable –

- Relevant medical records and list of medications
- Discipline information including Functional Behavior Assessment, Behavior Plan, attendance reports, all disciplinary referrals including suspensions and expulsions

A three ring binder with dividers or individual file folders are very helpful in organizing these documents. Documents should be separated into the above categories and then filed in chronological order. Parents can create an email file for their student and save each email and response from the school into this file for ready access. For more information, visit our website at [www.insource.org](http://www.insource.org), and watch our webinar on *Preparing for the Special Education Case Conference*.